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ABSTRACT

This paper delineates some basic characteristics of ethnic groups in contemporary American society and develops a typology for defining and classifying ethnic groups which is more consistent with the current characteristics of ethnic groups than many existing definitions and typologies. Several social forces have changed the characteristics and relationships of ethnic groups in the United States since the major concepts and theories related to ethnic groups and ethnicity were formulated. As a result, new concepts and generalizations are needed to adequately describe the characteristics of the "new" ethnicity. The functions served by ethnic group affiliation suggest that there are several ways of classifying ethnic groups and determining the degrees to which various racial and ethnic groups manifest these identified characteristics. Several types of ethnic groups are identified, including cultural, economic, political, eco-political, and holistic. While every American is a member of an ethnic group, the authors conclude that ethnicity manifest itself in diverse forms in modern American life, and that Americans belong to many different kinds of ethnic groups. The degree to which a particular cultural, nationality, or racial group is ethnic varies with a number of social, economic, and political conditions within the society. (Author/JR)

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ETHNICITY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SOCIETY: TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TYPOLOGY*

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Introduction

The civil rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of the "new ethnicity" among white ethnic groups in more recent years have stimulated a great deal of interest and discussion in the nature of ethnicity and pluralism in contemporary American life. Most of the concepts, generalizations, and theories related to race and ethnicity which are currently in use were formulated prior to the Black protest movement of the 1960s and the rise of the "new ethnicity" (Blauner, 1972). Consequently, many of these concepts, generalizations and theories are inadequate for understanding ethnicity in contemporary American society. The characteristics of ethnic groups in the United States have changed substantially since the seminal theories of assimilation were developed by sociologists such as Louis Wirth (1945) and Robert E. Park (1950). In this paper, we attempt to delineate some of the basic characteristics of ethnic groups in contemporary American society and to formulate a typology for defining and classifying ethnic groups which is more consistent with the current characteristics of ethnic groups than many existing definitions of ethnicity.

Ethnicity in American Society

Ethnicity is a cogent factor in American history, life and culture. The expressions and manifestations of ethnicity vary with the characteristics of the ethnic group, the nature of its societal experiences, and the socio-political climate. Expressions of ethnicity are also related to the ways in which the dominant group responds to various immigrant and immigrant descendent groups, to the objectives which ethnic groups wish to achieve, and to the new events which serve as the catalysts for revitalization movements (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970).

Individuals and groups in the United States have often been denied cultural, political and economic opportunities because of their ethnic group characteristics and their expressions of them. By the beginning of the 1800s, Anglo-Saxon immigrants and their descendents were the most powerful and influential ethnic group in America. English cultural traits, values, and behavioral patterns were widespread in Colonial America. The English were also strongly committed to "Americanizing" (Anglicizing) all other immigrant groups, as well as to "civilizing"* Blacks and various groups of Native Americans.

Through the control of the major social, economic, and political institutions, the English denied to ethnic groups who differed from themselves opportunities to fully participate in the decision-making processes. Only those peoples who were culturally and racially like Anglo-Saxons received unqualified rights to total societal participation and social acceptance. Thus groups such as the French Huguenots, the Germans, the Irish, and the Scotch Irish were victims of much discrimination in Colonial America. Southern and Eastern European immigrants, such as the Greeks, the Italians, the Slavs, and the Poles, who came to the United States in massive numbers in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, were denied total societal participation (Higham, 1972). Both the original English and the converted Anglo-Saxons saw these new arrivals as ethnically different from themselves, and thus undeserving of social acceptance and access to the social, economic, and political systems. (Jones, 1960).

The Assimilation and Inclusion of White Ethnic Groups

Early in America's history assimilation, or adherence to Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural traditions and values, became a prerequisite to social

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*According to the Anglo-Saxon definitions of civilization.

acceptability and access to the political structure. Although in the beginning European immigrants tried desperately to establish and maintain European life styles and institutions on American soil (Glazer, 1954), their efforts were largely doomed from the beginning because the English controlled the economic and political systems. The English used their power to perpetuate Anglo-Saxon institutions and culture, and to discourage the continuation of life styles and values systems that were non-Anglo-Saxon. Non-English European immigrants were faced with the decision of either assimilation and inclusion into mainstream society or non-assimilation and exclusion from total participation in the social, economic and political systems. They chose assimilation for a variety of reasons (Glazer, 1975). The immigrants who came from Northern and Western Europe came closest to a complete realization of the goal of total cultural assimilation because they were most like Anglo-Saxons physically and culturally.

The first generation of Southern, Central and Eastern European immigrants also tried desperately to conform to society's demands for assimilation and integration. However, the process was not as easy or as successful for them as it had been for their Northern and Western predecessors. Undoubtedly, the degree to which they were physically, culturally, and psychologically unlike Anglo-Saxons partially accounted for their lower level of cultural and structural assimilation (Gordon, 1964). These factors may also partially explain the current resurgence of ethnicity among second and their third generation white ethnics in the United States, such as the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Greeks, and their pushs for the inclusion of their cultural heritages in school ethnic studies programs. This interest has become so widespread that many advocates of ethnicity, in the last several years, have begun to use that concept almost exclusively to refer to white ethnic groups (Novak, 1972).

Novak (1974, p.18) writes, "the new ethnicity...is a movement of self-knowledge on the part of members of third and fourth generations of Southern and Eastern European immigrants to the United States."

The Assimilation and Exclusion of Non-White Ethnic Groups

Non-European, non-white ethnic groups, such as Afro-Americans, Chinese-Americans, and Mexican-Americans, faced a much more serious problem than Southern and Eastern European immigrants. While society demanded that they assimilate culturally in order to integrate socially, politically and economically, it was very difficult for them to assimilate because of their skin color. Even when Blacks, Mexican-Americans and Native Americans succeeded in becoming culturally assimilated, they were still structurally isolated, and were denied full, unqualified entry into the organizations and institutions sanctioned by the larger society. They became, in effect, marginal persons, for they were not accepted totally either by their own ethnic group or by the mainstream culture. Their denial of their ethnic cultures made them unacceptable to members of their ethnic communities, while the majority culture denied them full membership because they were non-White. While the societal goal for European immigrants, especially those from Northern and Western Europe, was cultural assimilation and structural inclusion, the goal for non-whites and non-European immigrants was cultural assimilation and structural exclusion (Gordon, 1964).

Thus, early in America's historical development Anglo-Saxon values and cultural norms were institutionalized as "American norms" and as "acceptable standards of behavior." They were perpetuated and transmitted through the socialization and enculturation of subsequent generations of Anglo-Saxon European immigrants. Anglo-Saxon customs and values were also perpetuated through the acculturation, but structural exclusion of non-white, non-European immigrant groups.

The latter goal was achieved through institutionalizing Anglo-Saxon customs and laws which demanded conformity by non-whites to Anglo-Saxon behavioral patterns, but denied them entry into the social, political and economic systems. The result, for many of these "colored peoples," such as Blacks and American Indians, was the loss of important aspects of their primordial cultures. The Anglo-Saxons sought to insure their dominance and power over these groups by stigmatizing their primordial cultures and institutions. Thus, when Africans arrived in America, the dominant group ridiculed their languages and punished them for practicing their African customs. Mexican Americans were not allowed to speak Spanish in the schools, even though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed them the right to maintain and to perpetuate their language and culture (Moquin and Van Doren, 1971). Texas even passed laws which declared Mexican Americans to be whites. In the 1800s, after most Native Americans had been forced from their lands, subjugated to federal controls, and relegated to living on reservations, American policy makers began an aggressive campaign to "Americanize" the Indians (Josephy, 1968).

Distinctive Ethnic Traits in American Society

Undoubtedly, many immigrant groups lost much of the flavor of their original ethnic heritages through the evolutionary processes of assimilation, acculturation, adaptation, and cultural borrowing. Some groups (principally Northern and Western European immigrants, and to a lesser extent Southern, Central and Eastern European immigrants) voluntarily gave up large portions of their ethnic cultures and became Anglo-Saxonized in return for the privilege of societal participation. Others were forced to abandon their original cultural heritages. The structural exclusion to which non-white, non-European immigrants and Native American groups were subjected resulted in the perpetuation of distinctive ethnic traits and the development of unique cultural institutions and

traditions (Herskovits, 1941). The cultures of these ethnic minorities differ in degrees from the dominant culture because these groups created values, languages, lifestyles, and symbols which they needed in order to survive the oppression, exclusion, and dehumanization to which they were subjected. These cultural traits were institutionalized and transmitted through the generations.

To some extent these cultural components are legacies from the original homelands of non-white ethnic groups, modified to accommodate the circumstances of living in America; to some extent they are new creations designed to meet the needs of particular ethnic groups. The cultural institutions and processes that were created clearly reflect the interactions between original cultural perspectives and the realities of American society. The various ethnic groups developed somewhat different cultural values because their ancestral homes, cultural perspectives, and experiences in America were different. The new cultures which emerged undoubtedly have some remnants from the original motherlands, but not necessarily in their original forms. Rather, the need to adapt to new surroundings and the effects of cultural sharing gave rise to new cultural forms.

The Black church, Black survival strategies, Black language, and Black civil rights organizations have some African cultural components, although these institutions, without question, were created by Africans in the Americas. They represent aspects of Black cultural life that were created to meet the unique social, economic, and political needs of Blacks. Black modes of communication emerged in response to the need to find viable means of surviving in a hostile environment without jeopardizing physical safety. Words, in addition to being communication devices, became power devices and helped Afro-Americans to survive. Black music has its primordial roots in the African heritage, but it is both an expression of the hopes, fears, aspirations, and frustrations of

Black Americans, and a reflection of their experiences in American society. The forces which gave rise to much of its lyrical content and rhythmic tempo were the prototype life experiences, both physical and psychological, of Black Americans as a group.

The ethnic cultures of most European immigrants were largely amalgamated in the United States. America became a culturally diffused and a socially and politically stratified society. Northern and Eastern European immigrants were almost totally culturally assimilated and structurally integrated into the dominant Anglo-Saxon society. Eastern, Central, and Southern European immigrants were assimilated to a lesser extent, and the political and economic privileges which they experienced reflected their lower levels of assimilation. Non-white, non-European immigrants and Native American groups (i.e., colored, highly visible peoples) were culturally diffused and largely structurally excluded.

The Nature of Ethnic Groups in Contemporary American Life

Our discussion of cultural and structural assimilation leads us to more complex questions concerning the nature of ethnic groups in contemporary American society, the functions which they serve, and the extent to which they exist in the United States today. An ethnic group may be defined as an involuntary collectivity of people with a shared feeling of common identity, a sense of peoplehood, and a shared sense of interdependence of fate. These feelings derive, in part, from a common ancestral origin, a common set of values, and a common set of experiences (Isajiw, 1974). Isajiw defines an ethnic group as "an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or descendents of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group" (Isajiw, 1974, p. 122).

Identification with and membership in an ethnic group serves many useful functions. The ethnic group provides a network of preferred individual and institutional associations through which primary group relationships are established and personalities are developed. It serves psychologically as a source of self-identification for individuals. It provides a cultural screen through which national cultural patterns of behavior and the value systems of other groups are screened, assessed and assigned meaning (Gordon, 1964). Isajiw (1974) suggests that ethnicity is a matter of double boundary building; boundaries from within which are maintained by the socialization process, and boundaries from without, which are established by the process of intergroup relations. The most important question to be considered in analyzing ethnicity in contemporary American society is related less to the extent to which cultural assimilation has occurred and more to how ethnic groups are perceived and identified by others in the larger society, especially those who exercise political and economic power (Isajiw, 1974, p. 122).

Ethnicity or ethnic group membership becomes important in relationships with other groups of people when one group discovers that it has great actual or potential political and economic power. Such is the case with the Japanese-Americans in Hawaii and the Poles in Chicago. Ethnicity also becomes important when one is a member of a highly visible minority group, such as Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans and Mexican Americans. It also becomes important when one ethnic group becomes conscious of being surrounded by another ethnic group (Greeley, 1971), such as Anglo-Saxon Protestants in Spanish Harlem and whites who live in predominantly Black urban areas. Individuals who find themselves in these kinds of situations tend to turn to their own ethnic group for their intimate relationships, for reaffirmation of their identity, and for psychological and emotional support. Attempts to satisfy these kinds of needs often

lead to ethnic alliances formed to influence social and political institutions. The individual feels that he or she benefits through the progress of his or her primary group (i.e., a sense of interdependence of fate). Therefore, as Greeley suggests

> Many ethnic groups have emerged in this country because members of the various immigrant groups have tried to preserve something of the intimacy and familiarity of the peasant village during the transition into urban industrial living. These groups have persisted after the immigrant experience...because of an apparently very powerful drive in many toward associating with those who, he believes, possess the same blood and the same beliefs he does. The inclination toward such homogeneous groupings simultaneously enriches the culture, provides for diversity within the social structure and considerably increases the potential for conflict. (Greeley,1971, p. 44)

Greeley adds, "Visibility, sudden recognition of minority status, or being a large group in an environment where ethnic affiliation is deemed important -- these three variables may considerably enhance social-psychological and social-organizational influence of ethnic groups" (Greeley, 1971, p. 46)

Towards the Development of A Typology for Classifying Ethnic Groups

The functions served by ethnic group affiliation suggest that there are several different ways of classifying ethnic groups in contemporary American society. While existing definitions of an ethnic group are useful, they are inadequate for studying the complex characteristics of contemporary ethnic groups in the United States (Isajiw, 1974). Most of these definitions were formulated when ethnic group characteristics in American society were considerably different and prior to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of the "new ethnicity." New conceptualizations of ethnicity are needed to better reflect the emerging characteristics of ethnic groups in the United States.

It is impossible for a single definition of an ethnic group to adequately describe the multiple and complex dimensions of ethnic groups in contemporary

American society. We need to develop a typology which will enable us to ident and to classify different types of ethnic groups and to determine the degrees which various racial and ethnic groups manifest these identified characteristi We attempt to formulate the basic elements of such a typology in this paper. It is important for the reader to realize that our typology is an ideal type construct in the Weberian sense, and that no actual ethnic group will represen a "pure" type of any of our categories. Rather, various ethnic groups will exhibit the characteristics we identify to a greater or lesser degree. It is also unlikely that any particular ethnic group will completely lack any of the characteristics that we will describe. The reader should think of each of our ethnic group categories as a continuum.

Each type of ethnic group is an involuntary group whose members share a sense of peoplehood and an interdependence of fate. A cultural ethnic group is an ethnic group which shares a common set of values, experiences, behaviora characteristics and linguistic traits which differ substantially from other ethnic groups within society. Individuals gain membership in such a group not by choice but through birth and early socialization. Individuals who are members of cultural ethnic groups are likely to take collective and organized actions to support public policies that will enhance the survival of the group culture and ethnic institutions. Members of cultural ethnic groups also pass on the symbols, language and other components of the cultural heritage to the next generation. The individual's ethnic cultural heritage is a source of pride and group identification.

An economic ethnic group is an ethnic group that shares a sense of group identity and sees its economic fate tied together. Individual members of the group feel that their economic fate is intimately tied to the economic future of other members of the group. The members of an economic ethnic group respon collectively to societal issues which they perceive as critical to determining

their economic status and work together to influence policies and programs which will benefit the economic status of the group. The individual within an economic ethnic group tends to feel that taking individual actions to improve his or her economic status is likely to be ineffective as long as the economic status of his or her ethnic group is not substantially improved.

A political ethnic group is an ethnic group which has a sense of shared political interests and a feeling of political interdependence. The group responds to political issues collectively and tries to promote those public policies and programs that will enhance the interests of its members as a group. Groups which are political ethnic groups are usually economic ethnic groups also since economics and politics are highly interwoven in American society. Thus, we can refer to those ethnic groups that work to influence political and economic policies that will benefit their collectivities as eco-political ethnic groups.

A holistic ethnic group is an ethnic group which has all of the characteristics of the various types of ethnic groups that we have described in their purest forms. Thus, a holistic ethnic group is an involuntary group of individuals who share a sense of peoplehood and an interdependence of fate, a common sense of identity, and common behavioral characteristics. Its members respond collectively to economic and political issues, and try to promote public programs and policies that will further the interests of the group as a whole. Afro-Americans and Mexican Americans closely approach the holistic ethnic group. Native Americans, Puerto Rican Americans and Asian Americans are acquiring more characteristics of a holistic ethnic group as the political maturity and collective political action of these groups increase.

Several questions proceed from our discussion: What is the structural relationship between ethnic groups and the larger American society? In a pluralistic society such as ours, is everyone a member of an ethnic group? Our analysis suggests that every American is a member of an ethnic group, that ethnicity exists on a continuum in contemporary American life, and that some individuals and groups are much more "ethnic" than others. Thus it is more useful to attempt to describe the degree to which an individual or group is "ethnic," rather than to try to determine whether a particular individual or group is "ethnic." The lower class Black individual who lives in an all-Black community, speaks Black English, and who is active in Black political and economic activities is clearly more "ethnic" than the highly acculturated Black who tries desperately to avoid any contact with other Blacks.

Third generation Italian-Americans who are highly assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon culture may be ethnic only in a cultural sense, i.e., they share the values, life-styles and sense of peoplehood with Anglo-Americans. They may do very little, however, to advance the political and economic interests of Anglo-Americans over the interests of non-Anglo-American ethnic groups. Afro-Americans, Puerto Rican Americans and Japanese Americans are all ethnic groups. However, they are structurally different kinds of ethnic groups and unless we keep the significant differences between these groups in mind when we are deriving generalizations our conclusions are likely to be misleading.

Of the three groups, Afro-Americans, especially in the mid 1960s, more closely approach what we have described as a holistic ethnic group. Puerto Rican Americans, until recent years, have been primarily a cultural and economic ethnic group, but have not been very politically active in a collective sense. However, recently Puerto Rican Americans have been becoming more of a political

ethnic group. Japanese Americans are probably the least ethnic of the three groups. This is true not only because Japanese Americans are highly culturally assimilated but because they are not very politically active in an "ethnic" sense. They are also very economically successful and consequently feel little need to take collective action to influence their economic condition (Kitano, 1969). In recent years, however, Japanese Americans have taken more collective political and economic actions, especially in Hawaii where they are increasingly becoming a powerful group. The degree to which a particular cultural, nationality, or racial group is ethnic varies over time, in different regions, with social class mobility, and with the pervasive socio-political conditions within the society.

Frequently, third and fourth generation descendants of immigrants who came from Northern and Western Europe (e.g., French, Germans, Irish, Dutch, etc.) are thought to have become Anglo-Saxon politically, socially, culturally, and ethnically. The contention is often made that these groups, through the processes of acculturation and assimilation, have lost all traces of their ethnic distinctiveness, internalized Anglo-Saxon values and behaviors, and consider their political and economic interests to be the same as those Americans whose origins are Anglo-Saxon. The preservation of the original ethnicity of these descendants has been assessed on the basis of the presence or absence of classic overt behavioral manifestations attributable to the original ethnic group. When these are not found in abundance conclusions are drawn to the effect that any ethnicity, aside from Anglo-Saxonism, is insignificant in defining the self-identity of descendants of Northern and Western European stock, in determining their primary group relationships,

and in governing their social, political, and psychological behaviors. Their ethnic origins have been dismissed as meaningless and dyfunctional, except perhaps on rare occasions when families get together for reunions and to reminisce about "great grandma, the old country and the old days," fix an ethnic dish, hold an ethnic marriage ceremony, or observe ethnic holidays.

However, the resurgence or rediscovery of ethnicity and the recent research on White ethnic groups challenge the validity of these contentions. Data emanating from the research of such notable students of the "new ethnicity" as Novak (1972; 1973; 1974; 1975) and Greeley (1971; 1974) suggest that ethnicity among Whites is a complex variable that defies such simple explanations and/or dismissals, and that it is a persistent, salient factor in the lives of different groups of White Americans, even though they may be fourth generation immigrants. Greeley (1974, p. 305) explains that white "ethnicity is not a residual social factor that is slowly and gradually disappearing; it is, rather, a dynamic flexible social mechanism that can be called into being rather quickly and transformed and transmuted to meet changing situations and circumstances."

In the last few years many White ethnic group members have become equally as concerned as ethnic minority groups with self-identity, with re-establishing contact with their ethnic and cultural histories, with developing a sense of ethnic unity, and with preserving their cultural heritages. This search for more gratifying responses to the question of "Who am I?" has rekindled an interest in ethnic heritage, and a growing awareness of the saliency of ethnicity in their lives. Whites from all socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g., Irish, Italian,

Polish, German, Czech, Slovak, Greek, etc.) have joined Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans in this search for identity. Therefore, it now seems more appropriate to talk about what Greeley (1974, pp. 291-317) calls the process of "ethnicization," or "ethnogenesis," instead of acculturation and assimilation, or "Americanization," if we are to make any real sense out of the cultural diversity and ethnic dynamism prevelant in American society. According to him the so-called "new ethnicity" among White Americans is not new at all. Rather, it is a rebirth or revival of interest in a persistent force in the history and lives of all Americans. And, its resurgence in the 1970's is symbolic of the cyclical nature of the ethnicization process.

Unquestionably, a great deal of socio-cultural exchange has taken place between the various immigrant groups and the American host society. But, this does not mean that either one is any less ethnic. The process of ethnicization leads to the creation of a broader "common culture," shared by both the host and immigrant groups. The immigrants groups take on certain attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors attributable to Anglo-Saxons, and English Americans adopt some of the immigrants' values, beliefs, customs, and symbols. Other immigrant characteristics persist and become more distinctive in response to the challenge of American life. The result for third and fourth generation immigrants, such as Italian Americans, Polish Americans, or Irish Americans, is a cultural system that is a combination of commonly shared "American" traits and distinctive traits preserved from their original ethnic heritages.

To adequately assess ethnicity when studying America's diverse populations attention needs to be given to the interrelationships between ethnic identification, ethnic heritage, and ethnic culture.

This is especially critical in understanding White ethnic groups since the demarcations of differentiation among them are often subliminal. If identification, heritage, and culture are perceived as separate dimensions or components of ethnicization, each with different attending behaviors, then one can proclaim his or her ethnicity by ascribing to any one or combination of these. Ethnic identification refers to where one places himself on the ethnic chart (i.e., "I am Irish, German, French, Norwegian, Slovak, Greek, or Black, etc.). Ethnic heritage is the specific study and conscious recollection of one's past history, both in America and the country of origin. Ethnic culture refers to the attitudes, values, personality styles, norms, and behaviors which correlate with ethnic identification (Greeley, 1974). Even though fourth generation Irish Americans, Polish Americans, or Italian Americans may identify neither physically, nor psycho-socially with their original ethnic groups, and have little or no consciousness of their ethnic heritage, their "Irishness," "Polishness," or "Italian-ness," is still very much a part of their lives. Their values, behaviors, perceptions and expectations, which are considerably different from other Americans, are determined, to a great extent, by the cultural conditioning that persists from the original ethnic experience. These cultural traits are transmitted across generations through family structures and socializational processes, and are often so deeply embedded in the sub-conscious fiber of individuals that they are unaware of their existence. This is why we frequently assume that White ethnic groups, especially those who emigrated from Northern and Western Europe, lose their ethnic identity after three or four generations in America.

Undoubtedly, ethnicity is even stronger and more conscious among European descendants who came from Eastern, Southern, and Central Europe than those from Northern and Western Europe. Such groups as the Poles, Greeks, Italians, Slovaks, Czechs, and Hungarians are more recent arrivals in America; their ties with their original heritages, customs, values and traditions are stronger, and they share less of a common culture with English Americans than do groups like the French and Germans. Their senses of ethnic identification, heritage and culture are much more apparent in their daily lives because of the more distinct origins. They are less assimilated culturally and structurally than other White Americans, and the ethnicization process is less developed. Therefore, their original ethnicity is more highly accentuated, and they are more likely to behave in clearly discernable ways from Anglo-Saxons than are other European immigrants. These groups are likely to support ethnic candidates for public office, live in tightly formed ethnic communities, continue to speak their native languages, marry within their own ethnic groups, conform more rigidly to ethnic values, and perpetuate their ethnic heritages through family structures and socialization. The forces of differentiation acting upon them are much stronger and function on more conscious, all inclusive levels than do the forces of homogenization (Novak, 1973).

The ethnic groups in the United States that are the least assimilated culturally and structurally, and are the most visible physically, such as Afro-Americans, Filipino-Americans, Spanish-Speaking Americans, and American Indians,as groups,have maintained even stronger senses of cultural identities. To a greater degree than Americans of either Western, and Northern, or Southern and Eastern European descent, they feel that their life styles and political interests conflict with those of the dominant society. They, therefore, consider themselves to be more "ethnic"

tnan these other groups. They have created and maintained distinct cultural institutions, values, norms, and languages. Excluded ethnic groups are much more likely than structurally assimilated ethnic groups to emphasize their feelings of kinship, to promote their cultural identities, and to try to influence economic and political institutions so that public policies will be more responsive to their unique group needs. Thus, in recent years Blacks tried to gain control of schools located in predominantly Black communities and Chinese Americans in San Francisco united to oppose efforts to bus their children to schools outside of Chinatown. Mexican Americans are more likely to vote for a Chicano for public office than an Anglo-American because they usually feel that a Chicano will make decisions more consistent with their ethnic group interests than an Anglo-American (Litt, 1970).

Both White and minority ethnic groups' preoccupation with their own ethnicity is situational and periodic. It surfaces and assumes a position of prominence in group activities at different times in history, and as different aspects of the psycho-social and eco-political identification processes demand attention. The nature of the particular identity need determines the way ethnicity is articulated, and the activities ethnic groups choose to accentuate their ethnicity. Whether that need is defined as the clarification or reaffirmation of cultural identity, the recollection and re-evaluation of historical experiences, the manipulation of social forces to benefit the ethnic group's membership, or gaining political and economic power to advance the social positions of particular ethnic collectivities, determines the "ethnic posture" of the group at any given time. These needs influence

whether an ethnic collectivity functions as an economic, political, or cultural ethnic group. All ethnic groups assume these various identities at different stages in their developmental processes within the context of American society.

While our generalizations are basically valid, they are not applicable to the same degree to all members of all ethnic groups. This is why it is imperative, when studying ethnicity, to distinguish ethnic group behavior from the behavior of individual members of ethnic groups, to consider ethnicity from the perspective of functionality instead of merely as a descriptive trait, and to analyze behavior of ethnic groups in terms of ethnic identification, heritage and culture. Some members of ethnic groups have little or no sense of ethnic kinship or interdependence of fate. They feel little or no sense of distinction or difference between themselves and the larger society. Some members do not identify with their ethnic group, even though they share its physical and/or cultural characteristics, and the larger society considers them to belong to it. For example, some descendants of Mexican Americans parentage consider themselves white. They do not speak Spanish, have Anglicized their names, and conform to white cultural norms. Some Blacks believe that they are both culturally and structurally assimilated into the larger society. They have inculcated the values and lifestyles of the dominant culture, consider themselves totally accepted by the majority society, feel a sense of alienation from Blacks as a group, and find it almost impossible to identify with the cultural and political goals of Blacks.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of ethnic groups in the United States and the relationship between them have changed substantially since the major concepts and theories related to ethnic groups and ethnicity were formulated. The civil rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of the "new ethnicity" are social

forces that profoundly influenced the nature of ethnicity in American society. New concepts and generalizations are needed to adequately describe the characterisitcs of ethnicity in contemporary American society.

In this paper, we attempt to describe some of the major characteristics of ethnic groups in the United States and to develop a typology for classifying ethnic groups which is more consistent with the current characteristics of ethnic groups than many existing definitions and typologies. We identified several types of ethnic groups -- cultural, economic, political, eco-political, and holistic --, and concluded that while every American is a member of an ethnic group, ethnicity manifests itself in diverse forms in modern American life, and that Americans belong to many different kinds of ethnic groups. We also concluded that the degree to which a particular cultural, nationality, or racial group is "ethnic" varies with a number of social, economic and political conditions within society.

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